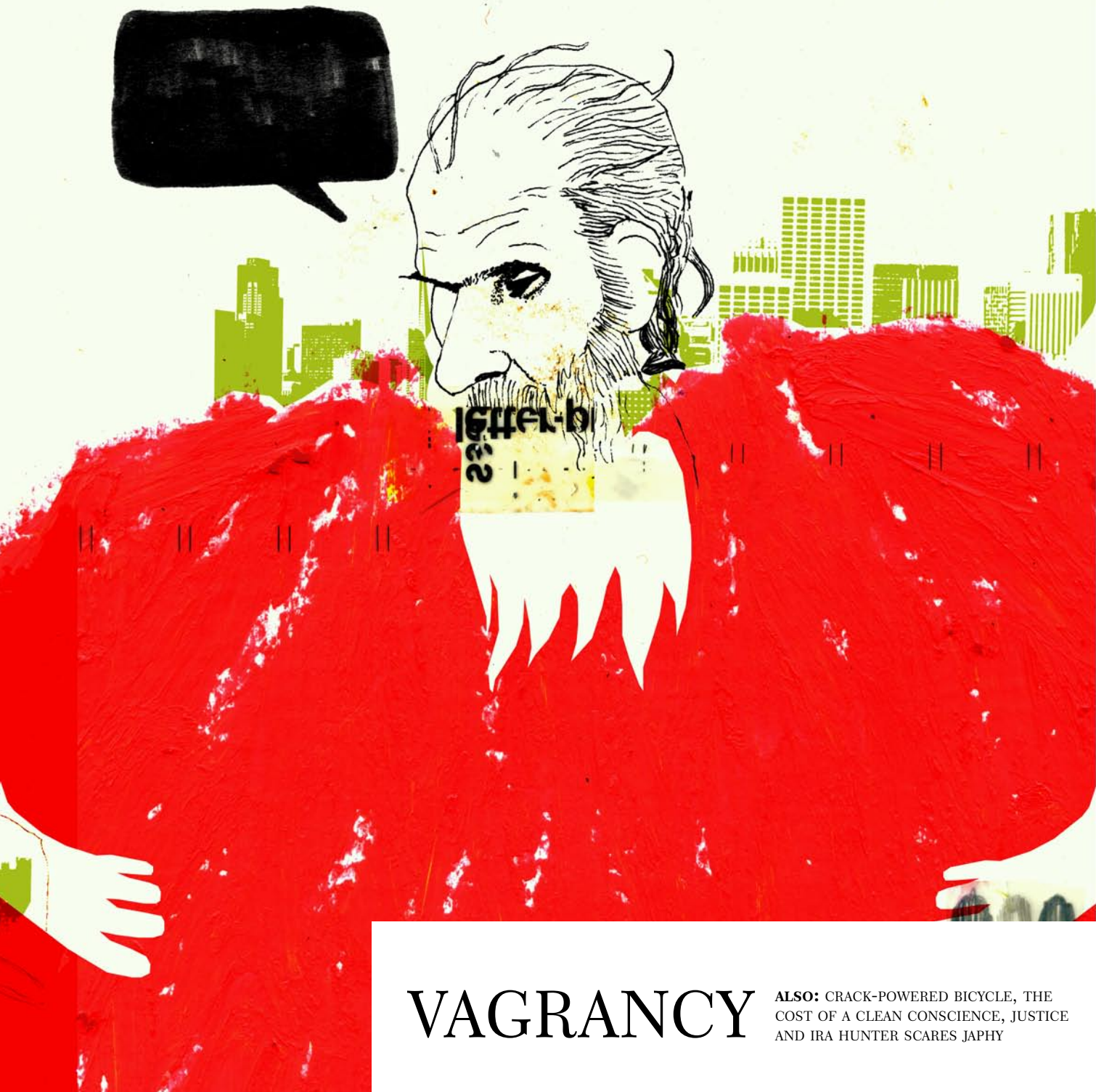


# Metropolitan

VOLUME FIVE ISSUE TWO - JULY 2007  
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## VAGRANCY

ALSO: CRACK-POWERED BICYCLE, THE COST OF A CLEAN CONSCIENCE, JUSTICE AND IRA HUNTER SCARES JAPHY



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Studio E - 1322 Broad Street  
Victoria BC Canada  
V8W 2A9  
www.themetropolitan.ca  
submissions@themetropolitan.ca

**PUBLISHER**  
STEVE WEBB

**EDITOR**  
KEVIN NELSON

**LAYOUT EDITOR**  
BRANDON VELESTUK

**MUSIC EDITOR**  
CHRIS LONG

**PHOTO EDITOR**  
BIG TINY SMALLS

**WORDS**

KEN GORDON, ADRIEN SALA, TARA CAMPBELL, CHRIS LONG, JESSE LADRET, LAURYN MORLEY

**PHOTOS**

BEN FOX, BIG TINY SMALLS, KEN GORDON

**DESIGN**

BRANDON VELESTUK, JOEY MACDONALD, EVAN PINE, CHRIS BRADFORD, STEVE WEBB

**AD SALES**

CHRIS BRADFORD

**ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST**

Andy Dixon is a freelance graphic designer and artist living in Vancouver BC. He sings and plays guitar in the band *Winning* and also creates experimental electronic music under the moniker *Secret Mommy*. Somehow, through being busy as all hell, he runs Ache Records, putting out some of the most absurdist, creative, anti-pop, anti-form music like *Flössin*, *Jab Mica Och El* and his aforementioned project, *Winning*.

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# THE COST OF A CLEAN CONSCIENCE

Words by Adrian Sala, Photos by Ben Fox



How much would it cost if you were to hand out a quarter to every person who asked for money in downtown Victoria? The idea arose after a discussion about a girl who suffered from a legitimate obsessive-compulsive disorder who was compelled to give money away to pan-handlers. After cashing her paycheque, she would walk through town giving out sums of money that went far beyond the toss of a quarter into a hat. She didn't stand a chance living in Victoria. Eventually, she went broke and had to move to a city where there weren't any pan-handlers, which, as far as I know, is only on the moon.

Hers was a sad story indeed, but an interesting one. I began asking about other people's habits - how they deal, or don't deal, with pan-handlers. I only ever give out a dollar once each day. After I reach my limit, it's tough luck for everybody else. I thought mine was a common practice but, after a lot of discussion, I began to realize that there are several different groups of people in Victoria, all with different positions on street philanthropy. Like myself, some give out a little money, but have a cap on their charity. There are some who have philosophical reasons for not giving out their hard-earned change, and then there are those who don't actually have the money to spare.

After talking with all of these different people, I was suddenly struck with the image of a television commercial from my teenage years. Taking place in the far north of Canada, it starts with a white blur that slowly dissolves to reveal two men, formerly known as Eskimos, sitting on an ice sheet that stretches far off into the horizon before disappearing. It's only the two of them. Sitting in silence, one of the men brings out a bag of Doritos. Opening it, he starts eating without offering any to his companion. His

friend, watching him eat chip after chip in silence, finally puts out his hand, indicating he would like also like to have one. The response he receives is one that seems to resonate with an underlying belief held by Victorians regarding pan-handlers: "But, if I give one to you," the man says, sweeping his arm across the empty arctic backdrop, "then I have to give one to everybody else." It's a statement that mirrors the assumption that there are colossal numbers of people asking for change in the downtown core. Whether you do or don't want to give cash is irrelevant, this thinking suggests; the common belief is that the amount of pan-handling going on downtown is outrageous.

To investigate this theory and find out what sort of money would be required to donate to everyone who asked for change, the brass at The Metropolitan supplied my companions and I with three rolls of quarters, a photographer, and an afternoon to hand out as much money as we could. There were parameters: no buskers, no stopping to spend money on lunch at the pub, and no giving cash to anyone who didn't ask for it one way or another. One quarter per person, and that was it.

We went out at noon on a Saturday, believing that this was the best time to be looking for handouts. We left from Habit Coffee and Culture on Pandora, and walked down Government Street, all the way to the inner harbour and then turned up Douglas. Once on Douglas, we began to weave in-between all the notorious hangouts for pan-handlers. We trekked up View, over to the Market On Yates, down Yates, in front of Chapters and over to Centennial Square. We went through Chinatown, past Streetlink, and beside the Johnson Street Bridge. We were pan-handler hunters, but after



an hour of walking through some of the best places to find street-people, we had only been leaved of five quarters. That couldn't be right, we thought.

Again, we went up Government, Douglas, Yates, Johnson, Wharf, Store, Figgard, etc. At the end of our journey, we were only out four dollars, two of which had been spent on a Street News magazine purchased from a street vendor. It worked out to two dollars in two hours. Parking meters make more money than that.

So, what does it mean? Does it mean that there isn't a large amount of people living on Victoria's streets? No, it doesn't. There are a lot - too many. What it shows is that our perspective of street-people is skewed, and that all this talk of downtown Victoria being under siege by pan-handlers might not be true. Yes, we did hand out a fair bit of cash, but we were looking for ways to do it. We didn't avoid eye-contact, or cross to the other side of the street. We went straight to it, and we could hardly get rid of the cash.

Not all people want something from you simply because they live on the street. Many of them live there because there is a large community that allows them to be as they want to be. They live on the streets we like to claim as our own, while we move around them trying to find shit we can put in our homes. When we balk at them or avoid them, it only deepens our own misinformed ideas. It separates us, turning us into a city full of Eskimos sweeping our arms across an icy backdrop of false belief.

Is there a solution? I don't know. We were simply trying to observe the scene, as it were, and search for some truth regarding the flood of homelessness

that becomes more apparent in Victoria each summer. We discovered that despite the belief that Victoria's legion of street people are after your money, the truth is that a community of people lives amongst us who are often wrongly accused of being pan-handlers, instead of simply being people who live on the street for any number of reasons. There certainly are pan-handlers, and they are sometimes aggressive, but how often do we wrongly assume something about a person because of the way they look, live or act? About twenty-six dollars too much, I would say, though I'm not complaining - I still have enough quarters left over to get lunch at the pub.

*Adrien Sala is a writer who made Victoria his permanent home last year after a seemingly perpetual seven years of travel. His fascination with the written word extends deep into his daily life and you can often find him pretending to be Hemingway while drinking coffee and writing short pieces about things that strike him as funny or bothersome. He is also single and extremely wealthy.*

*Ben Fox is a photo journalist working out of Victoria. He's taken photos of his experiences in Mozambique, Rwanda, Northern Uganda, New York, LA, Moberly Lake & pretty much everywhere else he's been. We love Ben because he captures the most sincere moments of his subjects and takes photos of some seriously weird shit. Ben's photos were previously featured in The Metropolitan 4-6.*



# CRACK POWERED BICYCLE

Words by Tara Campbell, Illustration by Brandon Velestuk



*"Raise our heavenly glasses to the heavens, squalor Victoria, squalor Victoria!"*—**The National**

Victoria may be full of poverty, but it isn't full of lepers. Throwing a few rupees to a line of people lacking limbs outside of a temple may be an amiable solution for easing a person's conscience, but thinking you're a good samaritan gets dicey on ye' streets of Vic.

I've intersected shopping carts dropping debris like a leaky Volvo - comb, pen, day planner (!), travel kleenex, syringe - all in a nice trail leading to the owner like mini eggs to the easter rabbit. "Excuse me, sir! You've dropped your syringe!" Diabetics need a shot of insulin in a hurry when their blood sugar goes askew! And so, I picked that puppy right up and got it back to its user. He seemed ecstatic. It's nice to see people staying on top of their ailments. Right.

In Victoria, monetary requests to pedestrians come by the dozen. Yes, Victoria has a homeless problem. I've given out a few dollars to panhandlers, and chances are, they've been smoked. Minutes later, heritage and local culture uniting as one, a deal goes down smack outside the British Candy Store. The reality is that Victoria's temperate climate is a mecca for shelter-less folks looking to escape prairie winters. But, if the homeless really are merely hungry - and god knows they've lost the faith of the population - what can be done?

Well, Ruairi Matthews, arguably the world's nicest man, as well as the sound regulator at Lucky Bar, has presented a solution: "The Crack Powered Bicycle." After finally getting ahold of Ruairi (a hard fellow to track down, considering his plans for ubiquitous social remedy), I discovered his theorized invention came from a photograph of a stationary bike attached to a blender. While this invention promoted the idea that one would build up their thirst as they blended their own beverage, Ruairi's penchant for humanitarian problem-solving led him to wonder, "why not a vending machine bike that generates power?" The reality is, civilians are frustrated with being solicited for change on the street, and the Kyoto protocol is upon us. What else is there to do but install turbine bicycles throughout the downtown core?

For all you mechanical hounds, the basic idea is to affix a generator on the back-wheel of a stationary bicycle. These little numbers will be designed to pop out a toonie once a certain amount of power is produced, which in turn will flow via alternators to the city's energy grid. Furthermore, a meter on the back will gauge electricity in amperes, or the amount of electric charge per second. A light will also illuminate, representing the amount of power generated, for those little tourists holding mom and dad's hand. Whether it be electricity, sustenance, education or crack, everyone can get their fix.

While the margin of power produced by a single model doesn't compete with windmill turbines or nuclear power plants, it comes from a dependable source, and the difference starts with one bicycle. By placing a pilot bike in a common traffic area such as Centennial Square, the demand might be great enough to get sponsorship from a small retailer. Ruairi has considered all facets: "It would draw attention to both [social and environmental] subjects, and the more things we have in people's faces that aren't negative, the better." A line-up for a single bike would speak quantitatively for the reality of our homeless problem, and it would turn

heads. After writing this article, Ruairi's arguments have even convinced me to evaluate the idea beyond satire.

Though it may appear presumptuous, the prospect of an eventual deal with BC Hydro isn't too outrageous. If avid support is shown for the concept, we could see these bikes scattered throughout the city before the CRD stands up to meet its 'environmentally sound waste treatment' rhetoric.

Civilians, for one, seem easily convinced. One downtown pedestrian commented, "If I was considering the streets as my home for the long term, I would like to have other outlets besides stealing." Furthermore, bikes are part of the Pacific Islander's lifestyle, and they would like to keep it that way. While bike theft has presumably affected at least half of the city's biker population, the abundance of these bikes would keep everyone in accordance with their needs. Ruairi said it best: "the crack people would power the island."

I queried an engineer in the Greater Victoria Area on the idea, and he was elated at the prospect of these 'monuments to physics' becoming commonplace. He suggested that not only would they provide youngsters with a hands-on understanding of a generator system, but they would also help familiarize the populace with a potentially viable fallback for our conventional power supply. "As global warming introduces an onset of natural disasters, mechanical generators will become a household reality." And, as Ruairi pointed out, pedaling for our power would make us a lot more personally wary of our energy use. Once these bikes begin transforming kinetic energy to battery power, they'll become the island's hottest addition to the citizen's earthquake emergency kit. It's simply a matter of evaluating our natural resources. If the government can build a monument counting down to the Olympics in Vancouver, then they can subsidize this. I can only hope that the bikes will outnumber the ridiculously painted Orca statues littered throughout the city. According to Ruairi, no human byproduct should go unused. "I love the idea of human-made power - we should be making power from our feces." Well, the CRD could surely consider that in the pitch for their up and coming waste-treatment program.



# A PLAYER LIKE ME

Words by Ken Gordon, Photo by Big Tiny Smalls

For those of you who don't know, Atomic Vaudeville is Victoria's most prolific and most successful comedy troupe. They have produced shows that have left me breathless, tickled my heart, and turned my stomach. Art that provokes a physical emotional response is art that succeeds in working its magic.

Founding members Jacob Richmond and Britt Small have both spawned plays under the production umbrella of Atomic Vaudeville that have been lauded with awards and gone places. Britt has just come back from the Czech Republics Fringe Festival where she presented "Circus Fire". Jacobs "Legoland" was recently off Broadway, by that I mean "in New York". I love "Legoland". It made me laugh so hard that my stomach was sore. The Japanese have a word for that, but I'll save it for a later date.

Having read articles and reviews about the troupe before, I didn't feel I could properly expose their process in an interview format so I infiltrated their ranks and became one of them in the spirit of the John Howard Griffins classic "Black Like Me". These are serious artists. Among them they have a combined 67 years of formal University Education. Could they be convinced that I too can act? Was my dramatic training, improv skill and post-modern dance background enough to seduce them into treating me as a peer? I know I'm funny, but am I funny enough? Comedy is reviled by the theatre community. They should know better than to present pop culture in a forum that only feels safe applauding conventional ideologies. To convince them of my worth I needed more than my reputation as a performance artist, I had to stop smoking pot for a couple of weeks, read the fucking paper and apply my persistence and determination to keep them laughing and convinced of my comedic genius.

My timing couldn't have been better, as they were getting ready to parody one of my favorite films, "The Warriors". Jacob's intent was to put on a show that was almost as gay as their previous hit "The Gayest Show On

Earth" but this time he wanted to focus on guy movies and the hot man-on-man action they facilitate. This was entitled: "Violence is Gay or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Let Johnny Touch my Gun". I got to play Ajax from the Warriors and deliver lines straight out of the film, but in the context, they didn't read as being very straight at all. Shit got pretty gay in the green room. There were competitions to see who could make the fiercest Mooseknuckle, who could do more pushups and a lot of hot cuddling. There were drag queens, underpants and the ever-arousing hunk of man that is Amitai Marmorstein. Talk about a slapped together, quick and dirty process. The format for the creation of a Vaudeville production goes a little like this:

*Day 1* - Meet at Britt's house to brainstorm ideas, claim ideas and commit to writing the scenes.

*Day 2* - Return to Britt's house to run scenes "from book" and throw in notions from personal work that are in keeping with the theme of the show and can act as appetizers, palate cleansers and dessert around the meat of the meal, which will be the central theme.

*Day 3* - Meet at the Event Centre to run as much as we are prepared to, threaten the weak links i.e. the people who haven't memorized their lines with public humiliation or worse, having their scene "cut".

*Day 4* - Tech the show with lighting and sound effects looking for holes and glaring "issues" this is the night that is supposed to be a dress rehearsal.

*Day 5* - The opening Wednesday. This is the show that actually functions as a dress rehearsal. Anyone who comes to an opening Wednesday show is seeing something that no one will EVER see again. All the awkward moments, the transitions from scripted to improvised material, the stagecraft equivalent to blood, sweat and tears.

This is the longest version of any given Vaudeville Production. There will be cuts; Jacob and Britt have to decide if something is salvageable or if it needs to be lanced from the production like a cancer threatening to infect the whole. *(Continued on page 11)*





## Q&A WITH IRA HUNTER

Words by Japhy Japhy & Ken Gordon, Photos by Ken Gordon



*Ira Hunter is pretty weird! He likes bad guys and thinks evil dudes are cool. Ken Gordon took me over to his house so I could see his action figures and I did another one of these Q&A things.*

### **Japhy: How did you get into comics and publishing and stuff?**

Ira: It all started in '98. I was laying out the script [for Champions Of Hell] when I met Robin Thompson in '99 through an ad I put in the paper. We then started Hunter Thompson Unlimited. We've published a ton of stuff: 30 issues of Champions of Hell, Habman - a super hero for the Montreal Canadiens, and Hemp Island - let's just say that one is an educational environmental comic. We've recently formed 13 Flames Empire, home of Zombie Jesus and the Champions of Hell. I also publish Absolute Underground, a bi-monthly punk / metal newspaper. Absolute Underground started at 16 pages all in Black and White, but now it's 52 pages with 20 in colour. I moved down here from Nanaimo and felt like the metal and punk scenes were really overlooked. There was so much going on all the time and no one was covering it, so I got into the game. Now we're distributed all the way to Toronto thanks to friends who help out along the way. This next issue will cover the Warped Tour, the Dayglo's tour in Europe and a whole lot more.

### **Do you write your comics?**

Yeah. I write and Robin is the main illustrator. Joel Shelton draws some, as well as Lawrence Denvir. We're sharing a table at Comicon with superstar Kill Allen Wrench, the guy from the Mentors. He's the guy "involved" in the Kurt Cobain death. Remember that movie Kurt and Courtney?

**No.**

Well, this guy El Duce implicates Allen on film and what happens next? El Duce's dead. I wrote a comic for Kill Allen Wrench and we even gave him his own level of Hell.

**That's weird and kind of scary. I like Kurt Cobain, but not as much as I like Meatdraw. What is this Comicon thing you mentioned?**

It's the biggest comic convention in North America down in San Diego. I've

gone every year for the last eight years. We went the first time without a table and sold stuff in the aisle, now we've got a huge table, guests, figures, t-shirts, DVDs and the comics of course.

*(motioning at the floor to ceiling stacks of comics that line two walls of the room)*

### **Do you take all your comics to Comicon, or just the stuff you make?**

I'm not a dealer. I just represent the stuff I produce.

### **How long does it take to write and make a full comic?**

Ideally a couple of months. Robin draws one or two pages a day. We're going to do this one in six weeks. We don't get to confer as much as I'd like, but I trust Robin to bring my twisted visions to life.

### **Your website said you had a movie coming. What's the deal?**

I'm in negotiations right now. The comics are the dream and Absolute Underground is the reality. It's all building to my giant movie project. The epic Star Wars of horror movies. I'm working with Ethan Dettenmaier through Snapkick Productions. We met at the Days of Darkness Fangoria Convention in LA.

### **What's your favorite big mainstream comic character?**

The Punisher and before that Asterix. I'm into the Swamp Thing and Hellblazer. I like Wolverine, anyone who's killing a lot of people. I'm a huge Clive Barker fan. He'd be my first choice to direct my film, but I think I'm going to have to do it myself. I should add film directing to my list of goals, I really want to remake my Zombie Jesus movie.

### **Do the good guys or the bad guys win in your comics and movies?**

I obsess about the bad guys in movies. Mine has 13 bad guys and even the good guy is kinda bad. A lot of Champions of Hell is based on the Bible; that and Dante's Divine Comedy. I take it, twist it, and make it my own. The ending of Champions will be a surprise for people; my character is actually

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Q&A WITH IRA HUNTER

(Continued from page 9)



the Son of God who has been deceived into thinking he's the Son of Satan. I'm trying to make my favorite movie, with no lulls in the action. No sappy dialogue, no cheesy love story, a non-stop gorefest.

### How many black t-shirts do you have?

Uh, five or six hundred. (He continues in response to the stunned silence.) I collect them -every time I go to a show I score another black t-shirt, I have a ton I've made, and I've kept at least one of each of my own designs.

### The action figures you've had made for your comic are really cool. Do you have figures and sculptures made for all your characters?

Almost all - we're working on it.

### The tattoos on your leg are almost weirder than Ken's. Is that the Stanley Cup you've got on there?

(points at leg) Yeah, I've got the Cup with all the dates the Montreal Canadiens have won and room for more. [I also have] portraits of five of their best players to date and I've had it autographed to be tattooed over by Guy le Fleur and Jean Béliveau. The other leg is covered in horror characters - it's even been signed by Jason!

### You've met more famous people than anyone. Who's your favorite?

I don't know. When I was around your age I went to Science World in Vancouver to meet David Prowse, the giant who played Darth Vader. A kid standing next to me was incredulous and saying "That's not the real Vader!" so Prowse picks him up BY THE THROAT and lifts him into the air, saying "don't underestimate the power of the dark side." The kid starts squealing and running all over the place, going "It's the real Vader, it's the real Vader!" Those were different times.

### I don't think movie stars are supposed to scare kids, even if they're bad. Have you ever thought about making a video game for your comics?

I really want to. I'm shopping the game around right now. It'd be ultimate.

Similar to God of War, but set in Hell. I'm leveraging into every market area right now, but on a small scale.

### Your comics - are they ever funny?

The tongue in cheek, Evil Dead kind of funny. I have a pretty sick and twisted, over-the-top sense of humour.

Ken took me to the Brickyard for pizza when I was done the interview, and I realized I still had some nagging questions. My mom is kind of annoying because she never wears black clothes, but that guy was kind of annoying because he only wears black clothes. Remember all those hundreds of black t-shirts? You have to have balance, I don't get it. Why does he like the whole evil guy thing so much, and what's the deal with Zombie Jesus? Even if Jesus was a Zombie, isn't he still like the best thing ever to some people? His figures were so cool, to actually get them made was so sweet. They didn't look any different from the real fancy ones at the comic store, but all his things were kinda freaky or gross, like guts ripping out and stuff. I mean, you can like all that evil dude stuff, but do you have to be so disgusting?

[www.championsofshell.com](http://www.championsofshell.com)

[www.absoluteunderground.ca](http://www.absoluteunderground.ca)

[www.myspace.com/13flames](http://www.myspace.com/13flames)

[www.myspace.com/passionofzombiejesus](http://www.myspace.com/passionofzombiejesus)

*Japhy Japhy (yes, that's his real name) is an accomplished writer and artist, all at the ripe age of 11. His mom runs the yoga studio next to our office and his father is lobbying for government from the front seat of a cab. He's also never read any of Ira's comics.*

## A PLAYER LIKE ME

(Continued from page 8)

*Day 6* – The run! Each night is different in that changes are made, shit's tightened up so that the show gets progressively cleaner and faster paced.

*Day 7* – The closing night dance party! Debauchery, dance music that's so-ridiculous-it's-funny and pizza! Once we've consumed enough to forget ourselves we start brainstorming the next production.

This would be a good time for me quote one of my heroes Quebecois director/producer Robert LePage from the book "Connecting Flights", I hadn't read it since the nineties but the Vaudeville experience made me think about it a lot, so I got it out of the Library to make sure I got the quote right for you guys: "It's important to distinguish clearly between actors and players. In French, we tend to speak of acteurs in film and comédiens on the stage. In English and in Germanic languages, there is the notion of a game in the word "player" and Schauspieler – literally, one who shows his playing – although, personally, I find that we see "acting" on stage more often than "playing". The notion also applies to the idea of the theatrical work itself, the play."

Atomic Vaudeville is just that, playing. The spirit of Vaudevillian comedy is so fresh and to the moment that they can incorporate topical items from current events and culture and like fools of old, humorously turn them on their heads, pointing out their inherent ironies.

They would be playing this game whether they were on stage or on a bus trip to the ferry. Taking something they just read about in the paper or saw at the cinema and turning it into a joke for the amusement of their friends isn't easy, particularly since their friends are the well-read cultural elite. They'd impressed me before, but being in on the process reminded me how much hard work goes into theatre. No one said art would be easy, I just didn't expect it to be so hard.



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### Die Poor/Switchblade Valentines/Koffin Kats

June 25th 2007 at Logan's Pub

Who says Mondays aren't a good day for a wild psycho-billy romp? Apparently, Victorians... The show hosted approximately 80 people. Considering Logan's is moderately sized, there was a lot of dead space throughout, particularly after homegrown psychobilly heroes **The Switchblade Valentines** cut their set short due to tendonitis (feared by IT professionals and guitarists alike.) Guitarist **R.P. Fogarty** played on bravely, but notes kept disappearing. Still, the new songs presented during the show sounded solid, boding well for upcoming releases. Starting out the evening was the relatively new trio **Die Poor**. If you were at home tying on a few more prior to heading out, chances are you missed out on the highlight of the evening. While the timing was a little loose and the originals a little crass, they were fun, exuberant and, most importantly, packing a washtub bass. Sounding like a coked-up **Johnny Cash**, the band made for an excellent opening act. Anyone who manages to bring bluegrass favourites like "Red Apple Juice" to life has my vote! Closing out the show were the **Koffin Kats**, who took to the stage in their uniforms of black vests, jeans, tats and attitude. **Vic Victor**, sang and played his upright bass like a demon. Doing scales during the warm up, he was getting the crowd riled up for a wicked, bass driven punch to the face. However, it wasn't quite what I expected. Where I was waiting for a wild, open-throttled, swing-on-mescaline kind of feel, I was supplied with speed punk. Three guys playing as fast as they could with Vic wailing into a reverb-laden microphone resulted in cacophony. However, if manic punk with a guy playing double bass above his head is what you're looking for, then you missed out.

[Shaun Hall]

### Dandy Warhols / The Upsidedown

Saturday June 2nd at Sugar Nightclub

It's no secret that the **Dandy Warhols** are rad. That's why it bites to have to write that their June 2nd performance lacked entertainment value. Their opener, Portland's **The Upsidedown**, delivered a stellar gritty-rock performance of sinister sounding organ-backed tunes and un-polished, smoky vocals. I dug the cliff-hanger endings, and the way they delivered repetitive riffs reminded me of the opening scene in **Planet Terror**. Heads down and happily dazed, the band focused on singer **Matt Moore's** vocals, and keyboardist **Sarah Jane** (formerly of the Out Crowd) is an excellent addition. After a brief intermission, a single hit on the cymbals from Warhols drummer **Brent DeBoer** drove the crowd crazy. Their hit "Bohemian Like You" - featured in movies like **Flushed Away** and **Sugar & Spice**, not to mention the insanely addictive TV show **Six Feet Under** - seemed like a logical choice for an opener to get the sold-out crowd fired up...but, they played something else. Their second song, "We Used To Be Friends," was sung an octave lower and sounded like a bad cover. I dug the fan that accentuated **Courtney Taylor-Taylor's** hair and dashing good looks (swoon), but that wasn't enough to keep me engaged. Dazzling green back-lighting and guitar-synched strobe lights made the show slightly more entertaining. Victoria was pseudo-penalized for being the last stop on the band's tour before heading home to Portland, as there were no albums, only two prints of odd-sized t-shirts and - the biggest hit - the refusal of an encore. Even keyboardist **Zia McCabe's** lively spirit and zest couldn't make up for the lackluster performance of the other members (and, a new mom she's the only one who had an excuse to be tired). I know for a fact that this wasn't their best performance, but nevertheless, I'm stoked on catching their next show.

[Lauryl Morley]

## WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING

Documenting Musical Experiences For The Reclusive Types

### Antibalas / The Kiltlifters

Friday June 22nd at Centennial Square

Upon arriving at Centennial Square for this show, I quickly fathomed that I'd missed **The Kiltlifters**. While I'm sure they're delightful, I absolutely detest the sound of bagpipes. (The Kiltlifters are a Ska band from Nanaimo that have been playing here for years. There is not, nor has they're ever been a bagpipe player in this band. Our Music Editor is a douche - Ed.) In the end, I'm sure that missing their performance was a bit of a blessing in disguise. New Yorkers **Antibalas** are anything, and almost everything, but Celtic. They're a rare occurrence in contemporary music -- they're unabashedly world-music (a genre that has a hard time crossing over with anything that isn't some horrible electronic hybrid like **Enigma**), but still kind of hip (they're signed to **ANTI**, a label that releases **Tom Waits**, **Nick Cave** and **Neko Case**, among others.) This dichotomy was on display this Friday night, not only on stage, but in the crowd. A bizarre cross-section of Victorians paid \$30 to gyrate, wobble and wiggle amongst a peppered group of hipsters, music loving families and actual fans of the band. Musically, Antibalas are North America's most popular torch-bearers of the Afro-beat sound created and popularized by **Fela Kuti**. For those unfamiliar with Afro-beat, the sound is a hybrid of African rhythms, funk grooves, big band jazz horn arrangements and chanted, communal vocals. Think a world-beat **James Brown**, minus songs, just jamming for ten minutes. Antibalas' political ideologies pop up in most of their songs and did on stage this Friday night, although their "no duh!" indictments of George Bush and Stephen Harper's "war overseas" seemed a bit wet on this evening. This crowd came to party! And dance! Weirdly! I ended up watching Antibalas and wondering if anyone understood the undulating rhythms and masterfully minimal bass grooves that they were dancing to. Was the amazing saxophone solo registering with these people? I was pondering why, in live settings, world beat and it's fans rely on celebrating the "vibe" instead of the fact that the musicians are fucking awesome. Then I looked down and noticed this little girl, who was two-years-old tops. She was having a grand old time, dancing about like nobody's business. And, it hit me: the beauty of Antibalas is that they get adorable families, yuppie office workers with terrible leather jackets, crusty hipsters and post-rave, cloth-draped hippies all together for one massive, undeniably good time. By the end, my feet were tapping and I was grinning. Well done Antibalas.

[Chris Long]



# INDIE IS JUST A COOL WORD FOR BROKE

The Do's and Don't's of Band Promotion by Jesse Ladret

As a person who has been on both sides of the fence, as far as promotion goes, I've seen a lot of strange things - great ideas and bad mistakes. Throughout the last few years, I have learned one invaluable piece of information: as great as it may be to learn from your own mistakes, it's a lot faster and cost-effective to learn from the mistakes of others. I've compiled a few tidbits of information as a means for up-and-coming bands to gain a bit of insight into how they can make the best use of their resources, as limited as they may be.

## Send What You Need

I once received a press package for an album that contained the following: one music CD, one "Making Of The Album" DVD, one 8.5x11 glamour shot, two bookmarks, one 28x22" poster, one postcard and one double-sided, full-color cardboard stock press sheet. This elaborate package was all neatly folded into a full-color, glossy presentation folder. Once I had examined the contents of this mystery package, my living room floor was covered in promotional paraphernalia, but I somehow managed to recover the actual CD that was hidden under this mess and threw it in the stereo. The CD was fucking terrible. This elaborate package most likely cost what most independent bands would consider their entire promotional budget. So, here I am with a terrible album, and my recycling bin is full only a day after pick-up. Sadly, this wasn't the first time I had received such a package in the mail. What's the point of this story? Well, remember - you're promoting your music, not setting up a trade-show at the P.N.E. No amount of tinsel will make your record sound any better. Send a few press clippings if necessary, a bio, and a CD. If the album is good, it's good! Don't try to distract people from the fact that you're promoting a poor album; it simply won't work. A great CD can be sent on a burnt disc in a photocopied case and, while it's not the most desirable format, if it's good, original music, then that's all that matters.

## If You Fear A Bad Review - Don't Bother To Send It

I have written a lot of reviews now, and my rule has always been to review either the best or the worst. I've received bitchy phone calls, angry emails, and have even had the finger of blame pointed at me for bands calling it quits, all because I've given honest feedback. While the last example weighed on my conscience a bit, in all honesty, if one bad review kills band morale to the point where you see no other choice but to throw in the towel, it's probably best to call it quits now. Your other alternative is to show a bit of character and see it for what it is: creative criticism. Music critics usually fall under two categories: subservient writers who strictly review bands they like and who give everybody a thumbs up, and harsher critics that speak their minds. If you are insecure about what people will say about you, all you can do is read the publications you're considering submitting to and skip the ones that scare you. You'll save some postage costs, but at the same time, you won't really get any honest feedback. But, if you get a good review from a harsh critic, there's a lot of validation in that alone.

## Want Feedback? Just Ask!

If you want some feedback or advice from anybody involved in music, be it a critic, promoter, small record label, radio DJ or any other person - just ask. By asking, I mean a personal email or even a phone call. When people are asked for advice on a specific topic, it'll most likely stroke their ego rather than be an annoyance. If you prefer to be an annoyance and want them to resent you before they even hear your music, spam their MySpace account or inbox with messages like "Hey dude, check out our tunes, let us know what you think, peace bro!" I get more than a dozen of these a day and have yet to hear a band who behaves in this way that hasn't made music that makes me want to punch myself in the crotch. Advice can come in many forms, but be specific: if you are wanting to know an affordable place to get CDs made, where you can consign your album, or a list of music reviewers, then say so. People in this industry can be very accommodating, and you'd be surprised at the wealth of information you can get by just being yourself and leaving your false sense of entitlement at the door.

## You Have To Save Money To Make Money

A friend of mine who used to write for Exclaim! magazine once told me about a particular band that wanted a review so badly that they sent their album to everybody who worked at the head office - and I mean everybody! I don't know if they ever got that review or, if they did, whether it was a positive one. Postage is an expensive part of getting your CD out to the masses. When you consider that there are forty-three campus radio stations in Canada, a dozen local publications, an infinite number of international zines/magazines and countless newspapers, you might want to do a bit of homework before heading down to the post office with a glad bag full of CDs. If you're a singer/songwriter that plays adult-contemporary new-age folk songs about Galiano Island and the plight of the British Columbia Marmot, perhaps Absolute Underground or The Nerve Magazine aren't the best choices to expect good coverage from. For the most part, if you're an independent musician, you'll be lucky if you even break even with your record sales, never mind the hidden costs of promoting it. Be particular, and know your audience. A good review is the best advertising you can get - plus it's free!

## A Little Bit Of Creativity Goes A Long Way

Press sheets and publicity photos are a great way to capture the interest of writers and DJs. However, it can also ensure that your album gets tossed into the crate next to all the other CDs that will never see the light of day. When writing your band's biography, be creative. When your bio consists of nothing more than comparisons to other bands, or you feel the need to list what sort of gear you use, ask yourself: "Why the hell would anybody care if we're influenced by Creed or what sort of Gibson my parents bought me for Christmas?" The answer is simple: they don't! Some good narrative and creative writing goes a long way. Press photos have the same power. If you want to represent how cool you are, perhaps having someone in your group wear the band's t-shirt is a bit silly. I might even go so far as to say that perhaps that back alley or graffiti mural backdrop for the photo shoot looks a bit cliché. There are a lot of ways to stand apart from all of this. Lately, I've seen press photos that are amazingly well done, from old men who play folk music dressed up in hospital gowns and staging hospital break-outs, to bands performing old-timey baptisms wearing white suits, submerged waist-deep in water. These examples create a feeling of mysticism that is as effortless as it is intriguing. Consider art or photography schools for getting some help with press materials, as they are often a great resource when a band needs some outside talent and perspective, and students need some good portfolio material. Overall, if what you send out piques people's curiosity, then that's the best attention you can ask for.

*Jesse Ladret is the former editor of Brand X Media and founder of Victoria's Self Righteous Records.*

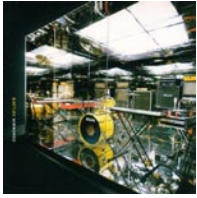
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## DITCH RECOMMENDS



### Battles *Mirrored*

(Warp)

Battles are what jazz fusion sounds like in 2007. On steroids. They're a mishmash of players, the most notable being Tyondai Braxton (jazz legend Anthony Braxton's son) and John Stanier (former drummer of proto-math-core pioneers Helmet). They sound like prog rock and jazz fed through a scientific calculator with the volume all the way up. On *Mirrored*, the notable addition of vocals (albeit incomprehensible chip-munk-esque babbling most of the time) provides a sense of structure to much of an album that otherwise would just be more proggy nerd rock for computer programmers. First single "Atlas" on paper sounds hilarious ("...um... annoying descending chipmunk vocal line over stomping shuffle beat... add dissonant guitars and synths... drums get louder... repeat...") but the sonic result is unlike anything you'll hear this year, or possibly ever again. It's startling, mid point through the track, when, after a minimal refrain from the core elements of the song, the crazy chipmunk vocal comes back in and BAM! It actually rocks unlike anything you've heard before! "Tonto" sports some of the best riffing that 2007 will produce, with some amazing counterpoint guitar between Braxton & Ian Williams (of Don Caballero) and "Race Out" takes full advantage of today's ridiculous production capabilities and surrounds your head with insanely tight polyrhythmic guitar figures (check the song out on headphones: it's insane) that end up riding out over a classic breakbeat thumped out by Stanier. That's the beauty of *Mirrored*: it rocks and rolls. While sounding like a precision machine half the time, the whole thing is backed by Stanier's wickedly groovy, off-the-floor drumming, organically grounding this whole thing and staving off a complete ascension into absolute holier-than-thou rigidity. Obviously Battles aren't for everyone, but even if the idea of this doesn't appeal to you (re-read this review - COME ON, Battles sound cool!), shouldn't you check at least one album out per year that you know for a fact will blow your mind?



### Simian Mobile Disco

*Attack Decay Sustain Release*  
(UMG/Wichita)

English duo **Simian Mobile Disco**, comprised of **James Ellis Ford** and **James Anthony Shaw**, have been making quite a racket over the last year, with a slew of club-ready singles that have some folks proclaiming them as heirs to the throne of fun-yet-respectable post-rave dance music. SMD's penchant for acid-wobble, chaotic noise, high frequency tweawking, ruthlessly groovy drum programming and obvious nods to hip-hop, funk and soul make the duo's sound totally immediate for anyone looking for a hooky, thumping electronic dance track that doesn't make you feel like a cro-magnon by your third listen. On *Attack Sustain Decay Release*, all of SMD's previous 12" singles are featured, but in truncated, "radio edit" form. This is a genius move: Attack Sustain forgoes the ridiculous standard of five-minute-plus over-indulgences that most people have just taken as "the norm" when listening to electronic music, but still packs enough musical lynchpins to keep these tracks sounding like classic club music. Bangers like "Hustler" and "It's The Beat" don't lose anything in the 3:30 (\*??\*) world of this record. If anything, this brevity shows how entertaining SMD's tracks can be in such a short period of time and makes the whole experience more listenable. "I Believe" and "Scott" see the group wander into armchair territory with slower tempos and a less abrasive sonic approach, but it's the hyper-electro hip-hop of "Hot Dog" that best exemplifies what these guys do, with a wallop synth-line that pushes a sinister agenda all over funky hip-hop punchlines. Simian Mobile Disco don't have the hipster-appeal of **Ed Banger's roster** -- to put it simply, they're English, not French -- but should delight anyone that pines for the raw sonics, club-friendly production and unabashed fun of early Chemical Brothers albums.



### Justice

†  
(Warner/Vice)

If you like drinking & dancing in a club, then chances are you're already familiar with Justice - Gaspard Augé and Xavier de Rosnay - the Parisian duo's remix of Simian's "Never Be Alone" is pretty much the biggest hipster hip-mover of the past 18 months. And rightfully so - obviously everybody wants to be fucking cool when they're out for drinks, but these guys realize that all those hipsters who like house music also sometimes like acting like they're in a National Lampoon movie, and that they'd like some fun dance music to soundtrack their puke-fest with. Justice's sonic recipe is as follows: take your favorite Daft Punk song; turn the volume up so loud it blows the speakers; drink a bunch of beer; dance your fucking ass off. So far in 2007, this recipe is working. Cue †, the heavily anticipated debut that has everyone frothing at the BitTorrent. "D.A.N.C.E.", the first single, will likely be Justice's lasting legacy in 2007 - it's a mid-tempo disco jam that gets you singing along to a gospel-inspired refrain. It's total iPod Commercial material. "New Jack" chops up vocals and creates a brand new mega-funky hook to flail around to, sitting nicely next to the warmer, looser arrangements of "Valentine" and "One Minute To Midnight". Everything on † bears Justice's trademark over-driven, treble-heavy sound, but both "Genesis" and "Stress", while still funky, delve into a more cinematic vibe that'll give the record a bit of a life outside of the club. Even though a third of these songs have been available for most of 2007, hearing tracks like "Waters Of Nazareth," and "Let There Be Light" again in an album's context totally galvanizes Justice's insane mastery of disco chaos and distorted funk-noise. This record is a good time waiting to meet you for drinks on the dance-floor. But you knew that already, didn't you?

*Pop into Ditch to check a bunch of great electronic, techno & synth-pop releases on our promo wall. Alex Smoke, The Field, The Knife, Luomo, Junior Boys & others will be featured until the end of July, at which point, we're sure, everyone will again lose any & all interest in electronic music whatsoever. Too bad.*

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# BIG TINY SMALLS EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



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Sylvia!



Rice Milk!



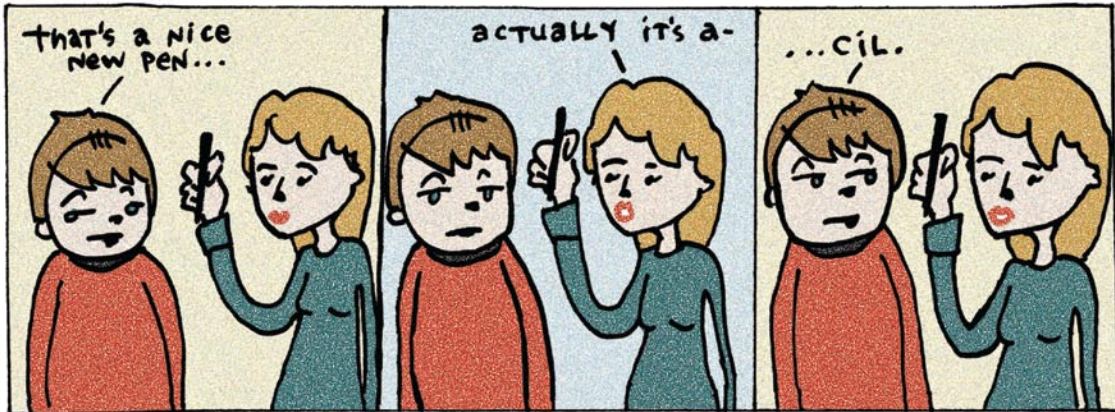
Dry Bun!



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